

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**SENT TO D.C.**

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

12-15-10

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Cermak, Anton, House

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 2348 South Millard Avenue


not for publication

city or town Chicago

vicinity

state Illinois code IL county Cook code 031 zip code 60623

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Anne E. Haas  
Signature of certifying official

Dec. 13, 2010  
Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain: \_\_\_\_\_)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
 (Check only one box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	1	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

**Current Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

**Materials**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals: Craftsman  
Other: American Foursquare  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

foundation: Brick  
 walls: Brick  
           Limestone  
 roof: Shingle  
 other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

#### **Summary Paragraph**

Built in 1912, the Anton Cermak house is located at 2348 South Millard Avenue, between Kedzie and Pulaski Avenue in Chicago's South Lawndale community area. The residence faces east onto South Millard Avenue, a densely populated residential street. The surrounding houses are primarily two-story residences, sharing similar massing and style. The two-and-a-half story building was built in the Twentieth-Century American Foursquare style and features a hipped roof, large double-hung windows, and red-brown face bricks with limestone trim. The house has a square footprint and a raised brick basement. It has excellent integrity and is virtually unchanged from its original appearance. The nomination consists of one contributing building and a non-contributing garage.

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### **Narrative Description**

#### **Exterior**

All four elevations are all clad with red-brown brick laid in a common running bond. Two limestone belt courses surround the building: the first is at water table height, while the second is set below the upper story windows as a continuous sill. Below this upper belt course is a continuous soldier brick course. The house has a variety of window types, but primarily they are one-over-one light double-hung sash painted white. Some basement level windows openings are filled with glass block. The house has a hipped roof and wide, overhanging boxed eaves covered with aluminum siding; the ridgeline runs east-to-west, parallel to the sides of the house. The roof is covered with green asphalt shingles simulating pantiles

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and has one brick chimney on the south slope of the roof. To the south on the facade is a wall dormer with a large projecting gable roof.

The front (east) elevation has a low-pitched hipped-roofed porch with wide overhanging aluminum-covered soffits that span the full width of the house. Originally, the porch was open, but now the southern portion is enclosed by a band of three double-hung windows flanked by cross-shaped brick piers laid in a stack bond. The southern portion of the porch features a strip of three double-hung windows flanked by brick piers. The piers feature limestone bases and decorative "capitals" consisting of a simple limestone architrave, an open brick frieze, and a plain wood cornice painted white. In the recessed corners of the cross plan are simple wood brackets, while large paneled rectangular limestone plaques with three "guttae" extend down from the cornice, through the frieze and architrave, and onto the pier's shaft. The piers rest on a tall rusticated brick balustrade with limestone coping that now serves as the sill for the window band. On the north, the open porch section has a similarly detailed corner pier and pilaster and the brick balustrade continues. The porch is accessed from the street via a flight of concrete steps flanked by stepped brick cheeks. The front door is situated in this section of the porch. It is a later added security door, original form unknown. The door features a decorative metal work and a simple transom. An original window with stained glass is to the north of the door. To the south, the porch enclosure continues with the brick work of the balustrade with a one-light window set directly below the porch ceiling. The south side of the porch is similarly enclosed.

The second floor of the east elevation has a three-sided bay window to the south and a single double-hung window to the north. The very shallow, almost recessed, bay window is topped with a simple stone lintel with end blocks and is flanked by large paired decorative wood brackets set directly beneath the eaves. These Classically-inspired brackets have a square upper

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section with a center lead and flanking scroll decoration set atop a long curved and triple "fluted" center that terminates in a plain band with three "guttae." The single double-hung window to the north has a simple stone lintel with end blocks. Connecting the two lintels and running behind the brackets is a lightly projecting header belt course that continues around the building and serves the flat arch for the upper story windows. The attic level wall dormer features a Palladian composition of four-light casement windows flanking a center pointed arched nine-light casement. All three windows have stone corner accents and the pointed arch has a central keystone. Below is a continuous sill with four small consoles. This window is sheltered by a very wide and slightly projecting pointed-arched gable "hood" that corresponds to the shape of the center window; its eaves are also aluminum sided.

The north elevation features a variety of windows. On the first floor, there is a shallow oriel with three windows and a corbelled brick base to the east. In the center of the elevation are staircase windows consisting of a small double-hung window set low above the water table and a tall round-arched stained-glass window set mid-level. The upper stone and brick belt course are raised slightly on either side of the stained-glass window and then continue as the window's round arch. A single double-hung window is at the west end of the first story. All the windows on the first floor feature simple limestone sills. The second floor has a symmetrical design featuring small narrow double-hung windows flanking the center stained-glass window and regular double-hung windows to the east and west.

The south elevation shows an almost symmetrical design, accentuated by the projecting central first story window bay that breaks up the straight lines of the house. There are two evenly-spaced basement windows located on either side of bay window; these are filled with glass blocks. The hipped roof bay window has wide overhanging eaves, three tall double-hung windows,

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and a continuous sill/belt course. The bay's spandrels have shallow brick panels. There is one single double-hung window to the west of the bay. On the second floor, the stone and soldier belt courses are raised above the bay window. Three smaller windows (two narrow windows flank a wider center window) are located above the raised belt course. At either end are single double-hung windows.

The rear (west) elevation has an off-center (north) two-story shed-roofed porch that is open on the first floor and enclosed with glass blocks and vents on the second floor. The brick corner piers are simply detailed with stone bases and flat stone abacuses with small square drops on the first floor; the second floor piers are without drops. The porch is accessed by eight steps on the west and a metal railing encircles the first floor porch; basement stairs are adjacent. A narrow door with four-light transom opens onto the porch. First floor windows flank the porch and there is a single second floor window to the south of the porch. A hipped roof dormer with a single window is centered on the west slope.

#### Interior

The interior plan of the Anton Cermak house is arranged around a central hall running east to west. The elegant oak return staircase is situated on the north center part of the plan with its landing level well lit by a non-original chandelier and the round-arched stained glass windows. The staircase features pairs of square paneled newel posts at the base, the landing level, and the second floor, as well as simple unornamented square balustrades. To the east of the staircase is the entry foyer/study, while across the center hall are the living room (southwest corner) and dining room, which are separated by a restored pocket door. The original bookshelf with glass panels in the foyer is still in use. The dining room, with the bay window, has a handsome beamed ceiling; the niche on the west side of the room is a later change. The kitchen and pantry are situated at the west

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end of the first floor and a half bathroom under the staircase. The second floor also has a center hall and four bedrooms, one in each corner of the house. Facing the stairs is the renovated main bathroom. At the west end of the hallway is the glass block enclosed sleeping porch now converted to a gym. Oak floors are used throughout both floors, while doors and windows all have very plain surrounds. The modified basement is now for storage.

The house has some interesting and significant features, including various lighting fixtures are original according to the current property owner. The lights feature some exquisite flowery themes and pendant central ornaments, all done in bronze coating. Another important interior feature is the round-cornered join of the walls and ceilings. All the wall-ceiling joints and wall-to-wall corners are round without sharp corners. Other interesting fixtures are an original 1930s thermometer located near the basement door, and a security system on the wall near the first floor staircase. The security alarm fixture has two small panels side by side with two buttons. It is possible that the buttons connect a pair of wires from the house that could be tied into the local police station through the telephone lines. The system was installed by Cermak as a defense against political violence activity when he was the Mayor, since not one insurance company in the United States at the time was willing to insure his life.<sup>4</sup> However, neither of these items currently functions.

#### Site

The house is built right very close to the east and south lot line. To the north is the vacant land that's now part of the property, simply landscaped with grass and a driveway. To the west of the house is a back garden, also landscaped with grass and shrubs, as well as a one story brick out-house, at 2346 South Millard Avenue. The cottage roof is Dutch gable and built

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<sup>4</sup> "Slav Newspaper Depicts Chicago in Absurd Terms," *Chicago Daily News*, Aug 14, 1937, page unknown.

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with asphalt shingles. The front elevation (facing east) features a central door with simple plaster surrounds, flanked by two vertical strips of glass blocks on either side. Farther from the door is a sliding window with metal awnings symmetrically positioned on either side. Built in 1922, the cottage used to be a facilitating room during Cermak's residence, and continued to be used as an office by Cermak's daughter after his death. It is now used as an office by current owner.

### Integrity

Today, the Anton Cermak house retains high integrity in several aspects. The neighborhood remains a dense residential area as it did in 1912, providing integrity of setting and location. In terms of design, the building retains its overall massing, roofline, fenestration pattern, entry patterns, interior arrangement of primary spaces, structural system, and ornamental detailing. There is only one change apparent on the facade—the southern portion of the front porch is now enclosed with glass block as have a number of original basement windows. The materials on the exterior including the bricks and limestone are all original and in good condition. A new asphalt roof, imitating pantiles, and a new gutter system and aluminum soffits have also been installed. Storm windows protect some of the original windows, including the stained-glass staircase window, and provide better insulation. On the interior, wood wainscot was installed and kitchen and bathrooms have been updated. The building today demonstrates high integrity, preserving the historic sense of Cermak's residency. The building's design, materials, and workmanship all continue a direct association between the house and Mayor Anton Cermak.



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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Politics and Government

**Period of Significance**

1923-1933

**Significant Dates**

N/A

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cermak, Anton

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Bullder**

Randak, Frank A., architect

Rezny, James B., architect

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**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period from 1923-1933, covers the span of time when Anton Cermak resided at the property.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

N/A

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)**

The Anton Cermak House is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B for its connection to Chicago politics and Mayor Anton Cermak. Anton Cermak, 1873-1933, became president of the Cook County Board of Commissioners in 1922, Chairman of the Cook County Democratic Party in 1928, and finally the mayor of Chicago in 1931. The nominated house is the only property in Chicago that is closely associated with Cermak and also where he resided during the most important years of his political career. Cermak lived in the house from 1923 until his 1933 assassination.<sup>11</sup> The Anton Cermak house is being nominated at a local level of significance and its period of significance runs from 1923 to 1933, the span of time that Cermak resided there.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)**

Anton Joseph Cermak was Chicago's first and only foreign-born mayor. His slow and difficult rise up the city's power ladder and his transformation from Bohemian mine boy to statesman make him an unforgettable political figure in Chicago, even the entire country.

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<sup>11</sup> Cook County Recorder of Deeds, Tract Books, Book 170, page 267.

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Cermak was born in 1873 in a Bohemian village, Kladno, Czechoslovakia, now in the Czech Republic. His family immigrated to America in 1874, finally settling in Chicago around 1900 in the heavily Bohemian west side. It is here in this ethnic enclave that Cermak constructed a political base to support him in various political campaigns over the next three decades.

Anton Cermak dabbled in various business enterprises in his early years after his service in a local mine to support the family, following his father's road. For example, he started his own hauling business at nineteen,<sup>111</sup> which gave his future political path a strong foundation in terms of leadership and communication skills. After serving four terms as a state legislator from 1902 to 1909, he was elected alderman Chicago's 12<sup>th</sup> ward in 1909 and municipal court bailiff in 1912. He returned to his aldermanic position in 1919 following an unsuccessful candidacy for county sheriff and was elected president of the Cook County Board of Commissioners in 1922.

Before Cermak, the Democratic Party in Cook County was divided along ethnic lines with the Irish being dominant. As Cermak climbed the local political ladder, resentment from the Irish contingent grew. When the political bosses rejected his bid to become the mayoral candidate, Cermak swore revenge. That is when he formed his non-Irish political "army" including black politician William Dawson, who switched from the Republican to the Democratic Party under Cermak's influence. Dawson later became U.S. Representative from the 1<sup>st</sup> District and the most powerful black politician in the country.<sup>112</sup> Cermak gradually wooed members of Chicago's growing black community into the Democratic fold. Cermak's political and organizational skills helped create one of the most powerful political organizations of his day, and Cermak is considered the father of Chicago's Democratic

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<sup>111</sup> Alex Gottfried, *Boss Cermak of Chicago: A Study of Political Leadership* (Seattle: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 17.

<sup>112</sup> -, "Biographical Directory of the United States Congress: DAWSON, William Levi".

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machine. As Alex Gottfried put it, Cermak was the creator of "the first cohesive city and state-wide Democratic machine in the history of Chicago politics."<sup>v</sup>

It was Cermak, not Richard J. Daley, who first recognized the enormous benefits of implementing the public policy "that good government was good politics—and good politics was good government." Cermak's ultimate political genius rested on his ability to adopt and articulate traditional reform issues and to make them his own while not hurting his political activities. His commitment to political reform was somewhat debatable, since it was used as a political tool to maneuver party allegiance. Cermak told the press, "The period of the backroom...is gone. From now on everybody in the organization will have his voice in the management."<sup>vi</sup> Cermak demanded that local government become more effective, efficient, and businesslike in serving the public interest. He wanted to show Chicago voters that a political party could run itself and a city like a profit-making enterprise using political victories as its overall goal.<sup>vii</sup>

During the 1920s and 1930s, still nearly two-thirds of Chicago's population were still foreign-born or children of foreign-born residents. The city was demographically ripe for a shrewd politician who could put together a powerful ethnic political mix—Anton Cermak was that man. Upon seizing party control, Cermak reorganized existing Democratic political apparatus into his own image. Multi-ethnicity was the new guiding political principle of Chicago Democrats. The blueprint for assembling the country's last political machine rested on the notion of depersonalizing politics between ethnic groups and individuals while stressing the joys and advantages of organizational unity. Thus, Cermak led his ethnically

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<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=D000158>.

<sup>v</sup> Gottfried, op.cit., Preface.

<sup>vi</sup> Paul M. Green and Melvin G. Holli, *The Mayors: The Chicago Political Tradition* (Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), 103.

<sup>vii</sup> Green and Holli, op.cit., 106.

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integrated Chicago and county Democrats to an overwhelming victory in the 1930s election. In 1931, it all came together for Anton Cermak as he swept into city hall, defeating Republican Mayor William Hale "Big Bill" Thompson by almost 200,000 votes. Cermak was successful in capturing working-class and ethnic voters by championing ethnic interests. For example, in order to get more Italian voters' support, who were in the main Republicans before the present Democratic era, Cermak placed persons with Italian names on the ballot and appointing them to patronage positions. This mayoral election helped secure the ascendancy of the Democratic Party, and ended the Republican Party's power in Chicago--no Republican has held the office of mayor of Chicago since Thompson's exit in 1931.

As Mayor, Cermak wanted to control or influence every aspect of city life through either the mayor's office or the Democratic Party. It was partly owing to his willingness to exert himself and partly owing to his refusal to delegate to others any responsibility that he could carry himself that he gained his deserved reputation as a master of detail. He also demonstrated how a party could adopt a businesslike approach to government and elections. Under his direction, the local Democratic party became one of the first, if not the first political organization in the country to use statistical analysis to evaluate political performance and to devise election strategies. Cermak intertwined the governmental and political process during his city hall reign. Individual loyalty to the city, loyalty to the government, loyalty to a community, church, or constituent was fostered and encouraged--as long as it was understood that it all fell under the mantle of Cook County Democratic Central Committee, or "the machine." Although it would take over twenty years to fully implement this incredible philosophy, it was Cermak who first made Chicagoans believe that his Democratic party was the only true and

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acceptable vehicle for one to practice local politics.<sup>viii</sup> Cermak also published a local party newspaper, *The Public Service Leader*. According to the newspaper, the party's executive committee had formulated "a scientific mathematically exact grading of the vote getting machinery in each of Chicago's fifty wards."<sup>ix</sup>

From 1931 to 1933, the economic issues of the Depression dominated Cermak's mayoral term. In his 1931 inaugural address, he said that the major municipal problem of "first importance" was the financial condition of the city: high taxes, the high cost of administration, and the depleted treasury. \* Understanding Mayor Cermak's actions regarding Chicago's financial problems is best achieved in the context of the Depression. Chicago, one of the hardest hit of all major cities during this time, had an unemployment number of around 750,000 by October, 1932. In September of that same year, by Cermak's own statement, only fifty-one of the city's 228 banks were still open. Throughout Cermak's term there was a danger that the city might default on its bonds and other obligations. In order to find funds to pay city employees regularly, which was by far the most severe crisis, Cermak scurried from Springfield to Washington D.C. to local bankers, to New York financiers to find money. Cermak drove himself and his associates relentlessly, trying to keep the machinery of government going while modernizing fiscal and administrative practices and drastically reducing municipal expenditures. Many of his activities were outside the normal, legal scope of a mayor's obligations, but Cermak made no attempt to evade responsibility. He tried every known method of solving the financial puzzle, even seeking financial help from federal and state legislatures and private bank owners.<sup>xi</sup>

<sup>viii</sup> Green and Holli, op.cit., 106.

<sup>ix</sup> Green and Holli, op.cit., 99-109.

\* Gottfried, op.cit., 241.

<sup>xi</sup> Gottfried, op.cit., 249.

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However, his struggle to secure proper fiscal support from the Springfield legislature failed. In addition, his continuing hunt for bank loans was also often unsuccessful. Borrowing money from the state government could not be done. Thus, in 1932, Cermak turned to the federal government and began pursuing Reconstruction Finance Corporation (R.F.C.) loans. Cermak organized an influential lobby group to go to Washington to get the loans. Despite all the effort, the trip was useless since the R.F.C. refused to make a loan directly to the city. But this initial setback did not stop him. He went back again and again until he finally managed to receive several loans from the R.F.C. He continued to seek federal aid regularly until his death.<sup>xii</sup>

Besides the terrible financial tangles, Cermak confronted many other important problems during his short term as Chicago mayor, among which were primarily public assistance and crime. Although Cook County administered almost the entire welfare program, Cermak could not stay out of the picture. He valued his picture as a humanitarian; welfare program was also a useful political attribute. Wilfred S. Reynolds, a top-ranking administrator in public and private welfare agencies in Chicago from 1910s to 1940s, described Cermak as a "welfare statesman." Indeed, Cermak had been so deeply involved with relief problems that he became a central figure in the city and state of relief problems until his death. His leadership was symbolized by his election in 1931 as honorary chairman of the Joint Emergency Relief Fund of Cook County. Cermak advocated public works not only on the federal level by contacting Washington D.C. to urge federal relief programs, but also on the city level by negotiating with the R.F.C. for a loan in order to build the long-delayed Chicago subway.

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<sup>xii</sup> Gottfried, op.cit., 258.

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<sup>x11</sup> Gottfried, op.cit., 258.



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Cermak's three daughters, the guard of honor preceding them in the parade was composed of members of the Sokol Union—a Bohemian athletic society to which their father belonged for many years.<sup>xvi</sup> Forming an honorary escort, members of the city council and the mayor's cabinet marched behind the hearse to the Cermak home. "Having taken the mayor to his own doorstep, his political and official associates will withdraw and the body will be left for twenty hours to those who mourn him most, his brothers, sisters, daughters, and their children."<sup>xvii</sup>

On March 9, hundreds of people waited in line at the Cermak home to view the body of the slain mayor. A line formed outside Cermak residence after body had arrived from Miami. The public was allowed to view the body during the afternoon and night. Many in the line were neighbors of the mayor. Residents of the neighborhood, realizing that those in line were cold and sometimes hungry, voluntarily carried out pots of coffee and plates of sandwiches. This, they explained, was their way of showing respect to the memory of the mayor.<sup>xix</sup> In the neighborhood of the home, where, in the bay window of the modest parlor, the body was placed for the day and night. Crowds struggled outside to get a glimpse of the coffin or family. Police, their voices softening, kept them moving.<sup>xx</sup>

At the time the coffin containing the body of Mayor Cermak reached his home, a mass was being said for him in the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd, a short distance away. The Rev. John Weaver, pastor, said the mayor had been a consistent supporter of all the churches in the neighborhood. From the time the doors of the Cermak home at 2348 South Millard Avenue were opened at 2:30 p.m., until late in the evening, visitors passed the bier of the mayor at the rate of 3,500 an hour. The line was constantly augmented by new arrivals. At 10:45 p.m. the lines of

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<sup>xvi</sup> "Council Names Street in Honor of Cermak," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Mar. 16, 1933, 5.

<sup>xvii</sup> "Cermak Funeral Notes," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Mar. 11, 1933, 5.

<sup>xviii</sup> "Chicago to Pay 3 Day Tribute to Slain Mayor," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Mar. 7, 1933, 4.

<sup>xix</sup> "City Mourns as Body Mayor Cermak is Returned Home-Crowds File Past Casket in Home," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Mar. 9, 1933, 18.

<sup>xx</sup> "Throngs to Pass Cermak Bier Today," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Mar. 9, 1933, 1.

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passing mourners halted while the Polish Singers' Alliance, a chorus of eighty, sang hymns in the house. At the same time a Bohemian chorus of sixty sang outside the home.<sup>xxi</sup>

### **Anton Cermak and South Lawndale**

Millard Avenue, the location of the Anton Cermak House, is in what is now the Mexican community of Little Village. Little Village, or *Pueblo Pequeno*, was originally known as South Lawndale, but was re-named in the mid-1970s by its Mexican-American majority. Both Lawndales (North Lawndale and South Lawndale) were originally located in what had been open swamplands west of the city limits, beyond Western Avenue. When rail service southwest from the city commenced in 1862, the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad became the boundary between the two areas. Annexed by Chicago in 1869, South Lawndale experienced rapid residential development in the 1880s as part of the general westward expansion of the city, but this development was contained on the south and west by accelerating industrial development. Immigrants from Bohemian Pilsen were among the first occupants of the area's small brick houses, followed in the 1930s by Poles and, since the 1960s, by Hispanics. By 1980, the community has the city's largest concentration of Mexicans.<sup>xxii</sup>

Wedged between the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad on the north and Belt Railroad of Chicago on the west, South Lawndale was referred to as "a residential island in a sea of industry" by historian Harold Mayer.<sup>xxiii</sup> The 1890s witnessed the mass construction of many single-family residences, plus an increasing number of two- and three-flat buildings and commercial/residential structures, a number of which were built along West

<sup>xxi</sup> "Thousands Pay Tribute at Mayor's Home," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Mar. 9, 1933, 4.

<sup>xxii</sup> Alice Sinkevitch (ed), *AIA Guide to Chicago*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (San Diego: Harcourt Brace and Company, 2004), 350-354.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Harold Mayer, "South Lawndale—an Island in the City of Chicago," *Real Estate*, Nov. 1, 1941, 7.

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Cermak Road between 1908 and 1912. In comparison with the previous decades, little residential construction took place in South Lawndale after 1920.<sup>xxiv</sup> More than half of current residential units are in structures built before 1940.<sup>xxv</sup>

In spite of the low rents and the relatively low economic status of the residents, the working class community was far from being a slum or blighted area. In 1940s,

Ninety-seven per cent of the dwelling units are in structures which are in good condition or needing only minor repairs. Most of the residential structures are relatively old. This is not evident from their condition, however, as they are generally well-maintained. South Lawndale is noteworthy for the length of occupancy of its dwellings, by the same families and for a high percentage of owner occupancy. The 28.1 per cent of the dwelling units which are occupied by their owners have a median duration of occupancy of fifteen years and two months, while half of the tenant-occupied units were occupied more than three years and four months.<sup>xxvi</sup>

The long-occupancy trait of the community contributed to South Lawndale's deep and continuing Bohemian roots. It also explains Cermak's lifelong association with the community. In addition, the homes were "exceptionally clean and in good repair." "The district is to be especially commended for its beautiful lawns and gardens which, although as a rule, only back yards are neat and well kept."<sup>xxvii</sup>

The first Bohemian immigrants reached Chicago shortly after the Revolution of 1848.<sup>xxviii</sup> In 1900, Bohemian immigration replaced earlier Dutch, German, Irish and Scotch in the Lawndale area. A few years later,

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<sup>xxiv</sup> Commission on Chicago Landmarks, *Chicago Historic Resources Survey*, 1996, III-230.

<sup>xxv</sup> The Chicago Fact Book Consortium (ed), *Local Community Fact Book: Chicago Metropolitan Area, 1990* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1995), 110.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Harold M. Mayer, "South Lawndale--An Island in The City of Chicago," *Real Estate*, Nov. 1, 1941, 7.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Adeline Loughlin, *A Community Study of South Lawndale* (ca. 1937, HWLC 9<sup>th</sup>, Lawndale-Crawford Community Collection), 19.

<sup>xxviii</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

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the area had largest Bohemian settlement outside of Prague. The residents of South Lawndale established many clubs, lodges, and similar organizations, among which benefit societies are the most important ones. The Bohemian ethnic group was politically and socially very active from late 1910s through 1940s. For example, Czechoslovak National Council of America was a non-profit organization founded in 1918 in Chicago, devoted to "promote co-operation of all peoples for the preservation of Democratic freedom."<sup>xxx</sup>

Family life and ties in Lawndale were strong. Married children very often continued to live under their parents' roofs. Cermak provides a case in point, having his daughter Helen Cermak and her husband Floyd Kenley live with him at 2348 South Millard Avenue after their marriage.<sup>xxx</sup>

Cermak, like other successful Chicago mayors, never moved from his community even as his own political and economic fortunes rose. Since moving into Lawndale in 1892, he always acted as a voice for his fellow people, expressing their hopes and concerns on various social and political issues. "Cermak 'made' Chicago Czechs, and Chicago Czechs 'made' Cermak," goes Alex Gottfried's comment on Cermak's lasting prestige among his people.<sup>xxxi</sup>

Benefit societies were among the most important organizations in the 1920s Czech culture in Chicago. Cermak belonged to at least one, perhaps more, of these societies. During the six years of Cermak's first city-wide office from 1912 to 1918, he maintained his complex relationship with the Lawndale Czechs. Although he was very busy downtown, he did not miss the Saturday night events of *eška Beseda* of the Bohemian Charitable

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<sup>xxx</sup> *Czechoslovak National Council of America Newsletter*, Apr. 17, 1980.

<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB213/usdocs/USDoc10.pdf>.

<sup>xxx</sup> United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*, Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1930, T626, 2677 rolls.

<sup>xxxi</sup> *Ibid.*, Preface.

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Organization.<sup>xxxii</sup> He was the director of Lawndale national Banck and the president of Lawndale Building and Loan Association since 1907, and was an influential member of several fraternal societies in the 1920s, most of whose headquarters were located in Lawndale. For example, Cermak was the director of 26<sup>th</sup> Street Business Men's Association, as well as the founder and president of The Bohemian Charitable Organization since 1910.<sup>xxxiii</sup> The Czechs organized "Sokols," or free thought schools, to fill an educational gap in the immigrant community. The Sokol movement began in Czechoslovakia in 1862 in order to promote physical, spiritual, and mental well-being of the people.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Cermak was an avid and enthusiastic Sokolite. He was the member of the board of directors of Sokol Chicago, belonged to the American Sokol Gymnastic Union, and frequently and willingly offered his influence and service to the Sokols. He was outspoken in his praise of the "spirit of cooperation and inculcation of ideals of discipline" which the Sokols were supposed to foster.

In his earlier years, Cermak took a very active role in community affairs as the Director of the Czechoslovak-American Chamber of Commerce. He was loved and respected by his Czech-Slavik constituency, the majority of whom supported his anti-Prohibition platform. Anton Cermak also leveraged his political and business shrewdness to help at least one local bank prospering. "He and the Cook County Board had money at Lawndale National Bank and kept it afloat during the hard times."<sup>xxxv</sup> The Lawndale National Bank was located at 3333 West 26 Street, now replaced by TCF National Bank. It was during the time of Cermak's political ascendancy that

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<sup>xxxii</sup> *Ibid.*, 95; *eška Beseda* refers to a type of Czech people's gathering common in the nineteenth century, which can take various forms. Topics on independence and nationalism are usually discussed at the gatherings.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> *Whos' Who in Chicago: The Book of Chicagoans 1931*, 177.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Richard Lindberg, *Ethnic Chicago: A Complete Guide to the Many Faces and Cultures of Chicago* (Chicago: NTC Publishing Group, 1994), 95.

<sup>xxxv</sup> "Minutes of the 1065<sup>th</sup> Meeting," *Bulletin of the Chicago Coin Club*, October, 2007. <http://www.chicagocoinclub.org/chatter/2007/Oct.>

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22<sup>nd</sup> Street between Cicero and Harlem Avenues became known as the "Bohemian Wall Street."<sup>xxxvi</sup> In addition, Cermak came down hard on the gangsters who turned the city streets into shooting galleries. An article in the *Cehesko Slovo*, a daily newspaper in Czechoslovakia was reprinted on the *Daily Svornost* in Chicago. It was titled "Poor Cermak", and reads: "The fight started by Chicago's new mayor, Tony Cermak, against the underworld criminal class is in full swing. That this is a battle to the finish is evidenced by the fact that Cermak has a personal bodyguard composed of 100 detectives. It is their civic duty to guard Cermak from the attacks of the underworld habitués."<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Anton Cermak was living with his wife and two daughters at 2532 Trumbull Avenue—also in South Lawndale—from 1910 until May 31, 1923. While serving as President of the Cook County Board of Commissioners, he moved to 2348 South Millard Avenue, where he spent the rest of his life.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Designed by Chicago-Bohemian architects James B. Rezny and Frank A. Randak, the Cermak House obtained its building permit in May, 1912.<sup>xxxix</sup> Before the Cermak family moved in, the house belonged to a local printer, an editor, and a nurse among others.<sup>x1</sup> The mayor's body laid in state at home for one day, March 9, 1933, where thousands paid tribute to the assassinated mayor. Cermak's daughter, Helen Cermak—later to become Mrs. Otto Kerner—always lived in the house and was bequeathed the property in November 1936.<sup>xii</sup>

### Architects

James B. Rezny and Frank Randak were the architects for 2348 South Millard Avenue. Both of them were Bohemians practicing in Chicago, with a

<sup>xxxvi</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> "Slav Newspaper Depicts Chicago in Absurd Terms," *Chicago Daily News*, Aug 14, 1937, page unknown.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Cook County Recorder of Deeds, *The Tract Books*, Book 170, 267.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Building permit index (permit missing). Permit number: A 3456.

<sup>x1</sup> Chicago City Directories, 1917.

<sup>xii</sup> "Cermak Estate Worth \$200,000," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Nov 13, 1936, 20.

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more localized, community practice than city-wide. Their main works are predominantly located in South Lawndale, and were completed between the 1890s and the 1920s, which was when South Lawndale was flourishing.<sup>xiii</sup> Each man worked independently, but they collaborated on the Cermak House and a few other projects.

Frank Randak designed a series of residential houses around both Lawndales, as well as two important public buildings—the Gymnasium and Natatorium in Douglas Park and the Lawndale National Bank, neither of which exist today. The residential designs of Randak bear a strong resemblance to each other, featuring pitched roofs, geometrical-based capital designs, front porches composed with bay windows, and Bohemian-influenced window patterns. Some houses, compared with 2348 South Millard Avenue, have more ornate details on their front facades. For example, the two story brick house at 2417 South Millard Avenue features detailed plaster column head: three flowers within the square border, with three "guttae" attached to its bottom. This house also has a classic "frieze" at the top of the porch section, as well as an arched lintel with flowery design above the second-floor bay window.

An existing example, perhaps the only one, of Randak's non-residential buildings is the Francis D. Nemecek Studio at 1439 West 18<sup>th</sup> Street. Built in 1907, the tiny Baroque storefront for the photographer had a well-lit studio space above its metal and leaded-glass storefront, which has been well preserved.<sup>xiiii</sup>

Randak also built the Gymnasium and Natatorium at Douglas Park in 1896. The gymnasium could hold hundreds of people at one time. The tower of the natatorium was "built with pressed brick trimmed with stone." "The architecture is nondescript but handsome, and the coloring is rich and

<sup>xiii</sup> Commission on Chicago Landmarks official website. <http://webapps.cityofchicago.org>.

<sup>xiiii</sup> Sinkevitch, op.cit., 355.

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gay." Frank Randak, perhaps exaggerating, commented that "there is nothing like this in any park short of London."<sup>xliiv</sup>

A surviving color envelope from the 1920s shows that the one-story Lawndale National Bank building had an elegant Neo-Classical symmetrical appearance, featuring pilasters, pedimented entrance, dentils, large glass windows, and a parapet with balustrades. As mentioned earlier, Anton Cermak had his personal funds in the Lawndale National Bank, which helped it to keep it running during the Depression.

Randak died in April, 1945, in Chicago without much notice.<sup>xliv</sup>

James B. Rezny, born in 1871, was one of the first Chicago architects to receive a certificate to practice under the new Illinois architectural law that was adopted in 1902. In 1898, he became a member of the Illinois Society of Architects. He began work as a draftsman in the office of Adler & Sullivan, and was later employed by Jarvis Hunt. Rezny was head of Hunt's architectural staff and held that responsible position for many years. He passed away in December, 1945.<sup>xlvi</sup>

Most of the buildings Rezny designed were two-story single-family homes. He commonly used unstuccoed Chicago bricks, a plain front porch, stuccoed lintels, bay windows, and a generally undecorated look, all of which are recognizable in the Cermak House. Rezny also built Saint Agnes Church at 2659 Central Park Avenue, a Bohemian church in South Lawndale.

St. Agnes Church was built as a Catholic Church in 1904 to cater to the need of Czech immigrants. This first church—then named Blessed Agnes—became too small to accommodate the increasing number of parishioners attending Mass, so a new, larger church designed by Rezny was completed in November,

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<sup>xliiv</sup> "New Gymnasium and Natatorium at Douglas Park," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Aug 20, 1896, 3.

<sup>xlv</sup> Cook County Genealogy Records (Deaths), file number 11273. [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com).

<sup>xlvi</sup> Henry F. Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects* (deceased) (Los Angeles: New Age Publishing Co., 1956), 504.



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1926.<sup>xlvii</sup> The church features a Neo-Classical front gable facade facing west, and a church tower with octagonal top at the south-west corner of the building. Details include classical pediments, scrolled brackets, arched windows, and a horizontal stuccoed course belt that wraps around the structure.

St. Agnes Church has conducted many funerals for nearby residents, especially those of Bohemian descent. Rezny himself and his wife both had their funerals in one of his own works of art.<sup>xlviii</sup>

Interestingly, Rezny designed a new modernistic addition of the original bank building in South Lawndale by Frank Randak on 26<sup>th</sup> Street. The now-demolished one-story, three bay building featured huge glass-panes in recessed square spaces, without excessive ornament except a little statue on top of the flat roof. "The exterior will be buff Redford stone with dark granite base."<sup>xlix</sup>

Rezny was also a member of the Chicago Board of Education in the 1920s, and was probably more celebrated than the silent Randak, the former was referred to as "a well-known Bohemian architect."<sup>1</sup>

To conclude, the former house of Mayor Anton Cermak is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B for its connection with Anton Cermak and Chicago politics; the period of significance is from 1923 to 1933 when he lived in the property. As a Czech politician, Cermak founded Chicago's infamous democratic machine by uniting democrats in spite of their ethnic differences, and also maintained a close political and social bond with the South Lawndale community that he was a part of.

<sup>xlvii</sup> St. Agnes Church official website. [www.stagnesofbohemia.org](http://www.stagnesofbohemia.org).

<sup>xlviii</sup> "Death Notices," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 9, 1953, B7.

<sup>xlix</sup> "In the Lawndale District," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Aug 31, 1930, A10.

<sup>1</sup> Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey [microform]: Czech.  
[http://www.archive.org/stream/5418478\\_1/5418478\\_1\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/5418478_1/5418478_1_djvu.txt).

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other

Name of repository: Chicago Public Library; Chicago History Museum

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Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Less than one acre  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	16	440506	4633191	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary of the nominated property is delineated by the quadrangle as indicated on the Cook County Tax Map, area 16, sub-area 26, block 108, parcel 0032

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property consists of the lot historically associated with 2348 South Millard Ave., Chicago, Illinois, Cook County.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Tianyi Jiang  
organization The School of the Art Institute of Chicago date Jun. 15, 2010  
street & number 310 W. 23<sup>rd</sup> Pl. telephone 312-208-2322  
city or town Chicago state IL zip code 60616  
e-mail tjiang@saic.edu

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

See continuation sheets

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**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

See continuation sheets

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**Property Owner:**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Albert Vazquez  
street & number 2348 South Millard Avenue telephone 773-762-6209  
city or town Chicago state IL zip code 60623

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.).  
**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

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Photographer: Tianyi Jiang

Date of photograph: Sep. 9, 2009

List of photographs:

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 IL\_CookCounty\_CermakHouse\_0002.tif  
 IL\_CookCounty\_CermakHouse\_0003.tif  
 IL\_CookCounty\_CermakHouse\_0004.tif  
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 IL\_CookCounty\_CermakHouse\_0006.tif  
 IL\_CookCounty\_CermakHouse\_0007.tif  
 IL\_CookCounty\_CermakHouse\_0008.tif  
 IL\_CookCounty\_CermakHouse\_0009.tif

Looking north.

Looking west.

Looking west.

Looking west.

Looking southwest.

Looking northeast.

Capital detail of front porch column.

Interior hallway, looking west.

Dining room, looking south.

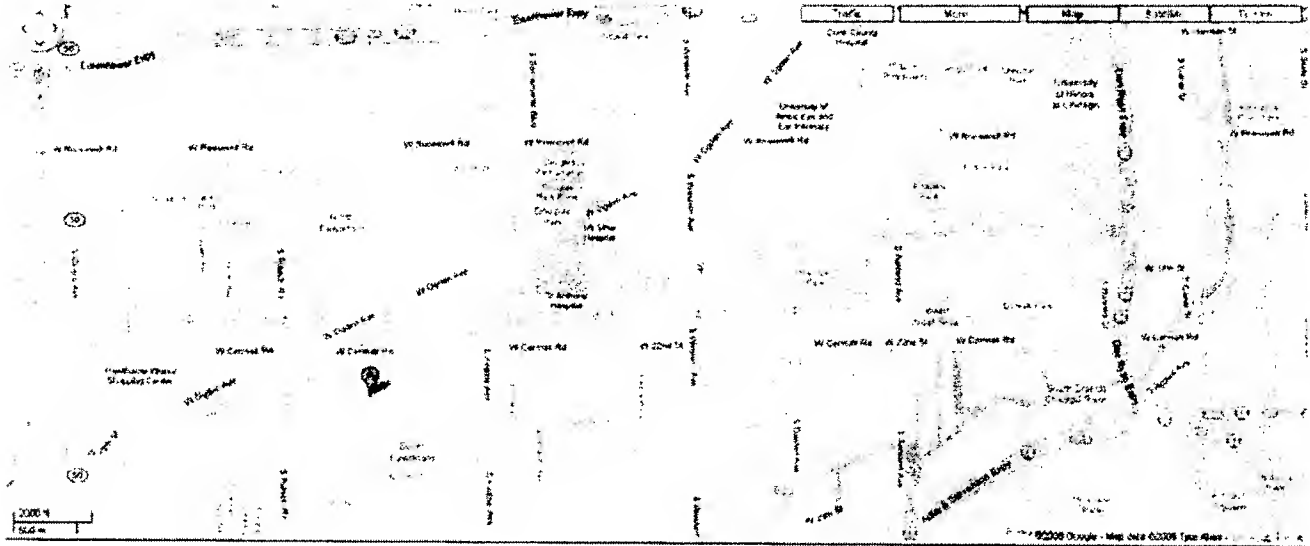
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Section number Map Page \_\_\_\_\_

Location Map:  
2348 South Millard Avenue, Chicago, Illinois



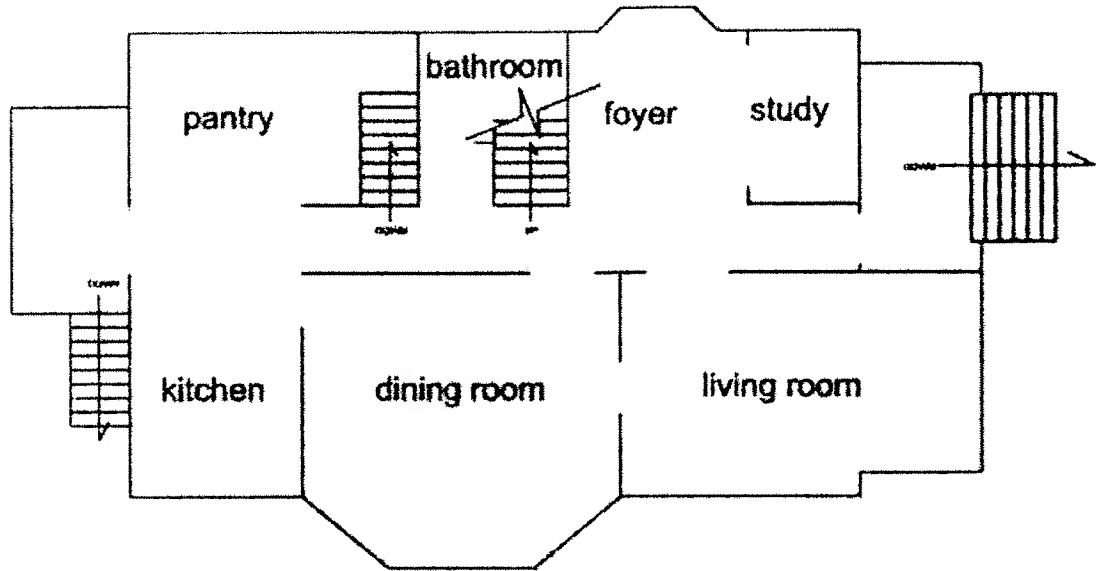


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

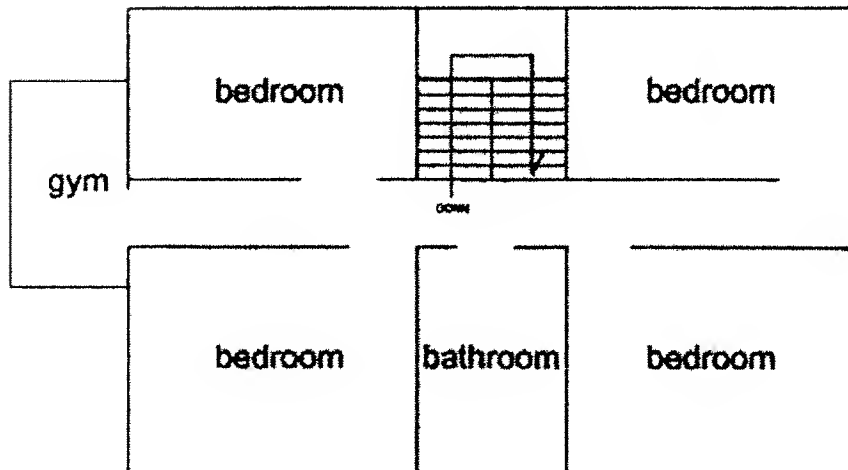
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FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

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Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Photographs

Page     

Historic Photographs:



"Mayor Cermak's home. The day of his funeral." March, 1933. From Lawndale-Crawford Community Collection at Harold Washington Library Center, Chicago Public Library.



"Cermak, Anton Joseph, street view of his home, day of his funeral, 1933." March, 1933. From Lawndale-Crawford Community Collection at Harold Washington Library Center, Chicago Public Library.

CA 110 from 4-Level Interchange in Los Angeles to East Glenarm St in Pasadena, Los Angeles, 10001198, LISTED, 2/04/11

CALIFORNIA, MARIPOSA COUNTY,  
El Portal Old Schoolhouse,  
Chapel Lane, Yosemite National Park,  
El Portal, 10001190,  
LISTED, 2/01/11

CALIFORNIA, NEVADA COUNTY,  
North Star House,  
12075 Old Auburn Rd,  
Grass Valley vicinity, 10001191,  
LISTED, 2/01/11

CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO COUNTY,  
PILOT (Pilot Boat),  
Maritime Museum of San Diego, 1492 N Harbor Dr, San Diego, 10001160, LISTED, 1/21/11

CALIFORNIA, SOLANO COUNTY,  
Dixon Carnegie Library,  
135 E. B St.,  
Dixon, 10001199,  
LISTED, 2/04/11  
(California Carnegie Libraries MPS)

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,  
Cermak, Anton, House,  
2348 S. Millard,  
Chicago, 10001201,  
LISTED, 2/04/11

ILLINOIS, JO DAVIESS COUNTY,  
Frentess, Henry N., Farmstead,  
19140 US 20 W.,  
East Dubuque, 10001202,  
LISTED, 2/04/11

LOUISIANA, NATCHITOCHE PARISH,  
Flora Commissary,  
LA HWY 120, approx 1/4 mi W of LA HWY 478, Flora, 10001194, LISTED, 2/01/11

LOUISIANA, ORLEANS PARISH,  
Bohn Motor Company Automobile Dealership, 2700 S Broad, New Orleans, 10001193, LISTED,  
2/01/11

NEW YORK, SUFFOLK COUNTY,  
Gravesite, Rev. Paul Cuffee,  
N side of Montauk HWY opposite 216 Montauk HWY, Hampton Bays, 10000852, LISTED, 10/08/10  
(Cemeteries of the Town of Southampton, 1640-1930)

NEW YORK, WESTCHESTER COUNTY,  
Rye Meeting House,  
624 Milton Rd,  
Rye, 10001134,  
LISTED, 1/14/11

NORTH DAKOTA, BARNES COUNTY,  
Amphitheater and Fieldstone WPA Features at Valley City Pioneer Park, SW of the  
intersection between 5th St and 8th Ave NW, Valley City vicinity, 10001195, LISTED,  
2/01/11 (Federal Relief Construction in North Dakota, 1931-1943, MPS)

NORTH DAKOTA, BURLEIGH COUNTY,  
Yegen House and Pioneer Grocery,  
808--810 E. Main Ave.,  
Bismarck, 77001023,  
REMOVED, 2/01/11